

## Chapter 3 Implementation

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The *Northside Village Economic Revitalization Plan* contains short-term and long-term strategies requiring varying levels of resources and activities for implementation. Several strategies build upon programs and services already underway in the community, such as the Weed & Seed program. The recently completed Social Compact Inc.'s *Houston Neighborhood Market Drill Down* and Environmental Simulation Center's 3D Virtual Reality tool also provide the community with valuable mechanisms to support implementation. To successfully achieve the long-term vision of the Plan, implementation efforts in Northside Village should focus on three basic principles:

### (1) Building Partnerships

Many of the goals of the Plan are shared by several organizations/agencies in the community. Building partnerships to achieve a common goal will make the most efficient use of available skills and resources.

### (2) Marketing/Outreach

Development of the Plan was based on building community consensus and active participation of stakeholders in the community such as residents, businesses and public/non-profit agencies. However, to make the changes called for in the plan, a marketing campaign targeted at a wide audience will go a long way in ensuring the success of implementation efforts. For example, presenting the *Drill Down* report results to potential investors can help attract economic development to Northside Village.

### (3) Financing Options

The Plan recommends revitalization strategies for transportation, housing, land use, economic development, etc. Identifying and leveraging financial opportunities and options are critical to meeting the full scope of improvements outlined in the Plan.

This segment of the Plan will describe how these three basic principles define the strategy for implementing the *Northside Village's Economic Revitalization Plan*.

## Partnerships

Partnerships support community-wide capacity building in organization, knowledge, experience and skills to address community issues and leverage funding. Partnerships can be created for a specific project or a set of projects; they can be short or long term, formal or informal. They allow a community to undertake activities that otherwise might not be possible, or that might be beyond the means of the community organizationally, financially, or time-wise.

The partnership process begins with the identification of stakeholders for a given issue and proceeds as the stakeholders come together to identify individual and collective resources. Partnership building should become an ongoing activity by community organizations.

This section of the Plan lists examples of existing and future, potential partnerships in the Northside Village. The existing partnerships, though not created specifically to accomplish the aims of the Plan, can still serve as vehicles to implement some its recommendations.

## Existing Partnerships

### **Northside Village Super Neighborhood Council**

The Northside Village Super Neighborhood Council, formed in October 2001 is a grassroots organization created under Mayor Lee P. Brown's initiative of neighborhood-oriented government that provides a "forum

for neighborhood collaboration and opportunities for the community as a whole to develop a neighborhood plan and prioritize their needs”. The Super Neighborhood Council can function as an umbrella organization by identifying potential partnerships and initiating project implementation efforts. For example, the Northside Village Super Neighborhood Council is partnering with 12 other Super Neighborhood Councils to address issues common to the neighborhoods.

**The Northside Health & Medical Corridor**

The main participants in this partnership are La Nueva Casa de Amigos, Casa de Amigos, the county’s Mental Health & Mental Retardation Authority, and Northside Redevelopment Center. This partnership can lead to the establishment of a new primary care clinic, the coordination of facilities and service, and new services such as adult dental, mental health, primary care, and wellness. The Northside Village will gain from the establishment of a corridor with significant public health care facilities that can be an economic stimulus to the area.

**Avance Head Start Program and Reaching Our Community Inc.**

A partnership is underway between the Avance Head Start Program and Reaching Our Community Inc. to intensify recruitment of families qualifying for participation in the Individual Development Account program by the Houston Community College System and Covenant Capital. Gulf Coast Human Services operates another program that may be incorporated into this initiative.

**Urban Business Initiatives Inc.**

The relocation of Urban Business Initiatives Inc. (UBI) to the Northside Village provides small businesses an

opportunity to access technical assistance from this volunteer organization. UBI provides management consulting services to businesses in the inner city; its clients are located within the federally designated Enhanced Enterprise Community. Plans are underway to evaluate methods that optimize business development and direct community development.

**Potential Partnerships****Civic Associations & Other Institutions**

Civic associations could institute a broad-based partnership with various institutions to: 1) provide new affordable housing; 2) provide information to first-time home buyers about the need for good credit and the home-buying process; 3) connect potential buyers with agencies that will assist with down-payments, etc. Such a partnership could include the Super Neighborhood Council, the Credit Coalition and Consumer Credit Counseling Service, the Northside Redevelopment Center, Avenue CDC and the City’s Housing and Community Development Department.

In addition to these activities, future partnerships could be formed to foster various forms of economic development.

**Day Laborer Services**

The Social Compact’s *Houston Neighborhood Market Drill Down* data indicates a sizable cash economy of approximately \$45.4 million or 16.0% of aggregate household income in the area. A portion of this cash income is generated by day laborers.

In Northside Village, as in other areas of the city, day labor hiring is seen as a problem. Residents report that they

often feel unsafe where the laborers congregate waiting to be hired. To address this issue, the Northside Village could explore the First Workers Corporation Center concept implemented in Austin, Texas. The center was organized as a non-profit organization, for the purpose of benefiting the day laborers, while at the same time calming resident fears for the neighborhood. The center is used as a registration place for contractors and laborers and provides banking and other services to day laborers.



In Northside Village, a non-profit corporation similar to the Austin model could be created through a community partnership to establish a similar center. Possible partners could include the Northside Redevelopment Center, Houston Community College, Houston Police Department, local banks, Urban Business Initiative, Inc., and the Houston Literacy Council. “Down” time for workers could be used as learning opportunities with classes on a variety of subjects, including learning English as a second language, literacy, learning how to become a contractor and learning about the banking system, etc.

This non-profit could become a source for community service work. Low-cost lawn care, landscape maintenance and trash clean up services could be contracted for community maintenance. Home repair and maintenance services to the elderly, as part of a coordinated campaign for home improvement, could be undertaken through this corporation.

### **Northside Village Small Business Incubator**

The Northside Village can take advantage of the opportunity to create a small business incubator. By encouraging businesses with a family, small-neighborhood orientation, such a facility can enhance the economy of the neighborhood. A small business incubator is an organization of services designed to nurture young businesses. It allows entrepreneurs to start up a small business and test the “waters” at lower costs, and at the same time, brings new economic development into the community. A wide range of services can be offered to entrepreneurs within an incubator, including management assistance, access to financing, technical support services, affordable work-space, etc. Using a concept similar to that of the Mercado La Paloma, (Esperanza neighborhood, Los Angeles, California) a small-business and community service incubator could be developed to provide a place for local entrepreneurs to start businesses that would attract consumers from downtown and the surrounding area.



*The Mercado La Paloma project involved the redevelopment of a vacant, deteriorated 34,000 square foot, two-story warehouse and adjacent 1/2 acre plaza and parking area into a premier neighborhood gathering place.*

At Mercado La Paloma, in Los Angeles, the first floor marketplace serves as a small business incubator and provides space for local entrepreneurs that specialize in food services, handmade goods and other services. Start-up financing, inventory training, technical assistance and group marketing is made available to tenants. The Mercado also contains conference and meeting facilities for workshops, special events and private parties. Community services include nutrition classes, business training, art workshops for children, after-school tutoring, a kid's reading nook and natural science exhibits, as well as, a non-profit art gallery where local artists can exhibit their work for free and space for nonprofit community organizations (a 10% commission on each sale reverts to the Esperanza Corporation). In addition, a computer lab with 21 stations is available.

To ensure the success of such a venture in Northside Village, a small-business incubator should:

- Market the area to draw patrons from the downtown, nearby and local residential markets.
- Create a “second-floor capacity” which would house business-oriented organizations and firms that provide technical assistance and business services (such as book keeping, legal services, etc.) to service small-businesses in the incubator as well as other local businesses.
- Ensure, through a mission statement, that products and services are sufficiently diverse to appeal to different, distinct markets (downtown, the Heights, etc.). Events such as fairs, farmers' markets, garden shows, etc., should be used to showcase the neighborhood, as well as, provide an attractive venue for consumers.

#### **Northside TeleVillage**

Telecommunications networks can be used as a substitute for much larger bricks and mortar development. This

concept has been implemented successfully at the Blueline TeleVillage in Compton California. The TeleVillage concept could allow Northside Village many of the benefits of a large community center without the corresponding costs. Siembab Planning Associates reports that a TeleVillage, for instance, can provide the functionality of a 10,000 square foot branch bank in a nine square foot space occupied by an ATM. Telecommunication networks can be used to import many different functions in a 50,000 square foot community building which would contain the functions and activities that would normally occupy 200,000 to 500,000 square feet.

Specifically, the TeleVillage concept combines the functions of shopping center/civic center/transit stop. This concept provides a good fit with Northside Village's efforts to create transit-oriented mixed-use development that can capitalize on potential light rail expansions. The TeleVillage principle is advocated by the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) and is at the heart of joint development programs with public transit agencies. Transit-oriented development, livable communities, compact development and smart communities are all compatible with the TeleVillage concept.

A Northside Village TeleVillage could become a key long-term community-development catalyst. It can provide consumer and business services, worker training, education programs and teleworker opportunities in support of the *Northside Village Economic Revitalization Plan*. By capitalizing on transportation connections (rail, local bus, regional transit – rail or bus), the center can attract community members and regional patrons alike to consumer businesses and public services located in the TeleVillage.

TeleVillage management could establish policies to maintain a mix of public and retail services responding to market and community priorities. For instance, reproduction services (such as Kinko's or AlphaGraphics) may find the TeleVillage an ideal location. Businesses finding their way into the new Near Northside consumer market might test the market from the TeleVillage.

The Northside TeleVillage could support community development campaigns. Civic associations can set a 100% computer literacy goal, provide TeleVillage membership through association fees (including free email address), and sponsor introductory classes at the TeleVillage—possibly provided by the Houston Community College and Latino Learning Center. Online worker-skill training is feasible through the Technology for All, Inc. curriculum.

Strategies such as these can be part of the community goal to stabilize and increase income through skill building, increased understanding of personal finance, loan qualification, and other types of self improvement. Similarly, the Houston Community College's online financial literacy courses can become part of the community strategy to retain community members facing increasing property taxes and needing to qualify for bank equity loans for home improvements. The community college's video library may also be available through TeleVillage for self-improvement.

The Social Compact *Houston Neighborhood Market Drill Down* data introduced elsewhere in this report (see Appendix C) shows that 43.9% of the households in Northside Village do not have a documented banking relationship. The TeleVillage could capitalize on this fact

as Telebanking becomes feasible (especially through their bill-paying services). A branch bank also may be possible as well as a Reliant Energy bill-paying computer kiosk.

TeleVillage is not limited to these suggested uses; the concept is adaptable to community priorities. It is a way to apply technology to solving pressing community economic development problems. TeleVillage integrates public services, consumer conveniences, transportation and information provision with commercial activity.

### Marketing/Outreach Approach

Marketing involves informing an audience about some community feature, encouraging or changing a certain impression of the community and/or achieving a specific action, such as new investment in the community. Marketing efforts should be geared primarily towards three activities:

#### (A) Definition of Product

The product can be the *Northside Village Economic Revitalization Plan* or the *Houston Neighborhood Market Drill Down* or any specific component of the plan such as the *Urban Design Guidelines* to be marketed within the Northside community and/or the greater Houston region.

While the Plan outlines short term and long term strategies for land use, transportation, housing, urban design guidelines etc, the Drill Down Study provides valuable and specific data about population, income levels and potential markets that intend to spur economic revitalization by attracting investors, businesses and developers. In summary, the Social Compact findings indicate the Northside Village has:

- A larger population and number of households than



reported in Census 2000

- A very robust retail market
- Mainly a young Mexican and Mexican American growth market (85.5% of total population)
- Very substantial untapped opportunities including a large market (43.9% of households) without banking connections
- 605 businesses generating more than \$1.2 billion in revenues
- A destination market reflecting a retail sales volume of \$250 million
- A significant cash economy of \$ 45.4 million – 16% of the aggregate household income of 284 million

These findings suggest multiple opportunities for revitalization of the community. (See Appendix C for more information)

### **(B) Identification of Audience**

The second step is to identify the audience most likely to benefit from the critical strategies the Plan recommends. Defining the audience at the outset of every marketing effort is important, as different segments of the community have varying access to information and different ways of communication.

The Northside Village Super Neighborhood Council can take the lead in marketing the Plan to neighborhood residents who should be knowledgeable about the plan. Local residents should have firsthand information for a marketing campaign to be successful.

Equally important are potential investors in the Northside community: developers, businesses and bankers. This type of audience will need a more focused, possibly one-on-

one approach, as compared to a general community-wide outreach effort.

### **(C) Selection of Marketing Tools**

There are many tools available for marketing efforts: 3D Virtual Reality presentations, brochures, websites, etc. Use should be based on the audience to be reached.

#### **(1) Brochures**

Individual organizations should extract the relevant portions of this report applying to their interest areas (along with recommendations) and produce low-cost brochures. For example, a civic association may want to inform its members about sidewalk, ditch, and nearby corridor improvements.

#### **(2) Newsletter/Serialized Articles**

The entire report can be serialized into easy to read articles for insertion in civic association newsletters.

#### **(3) Abbreviated Report**

The Super Neighborhood Council should work with the Greater Northside Management District and/or the Northside Chamber of Commerce to sponsor a short, concise version of this report. Different from the brochures referred to earlier, this is intended to be a non-technical promotional report, similar to an annual report that highlights the sections in an easy-to-read format. For instance, bankers might see the opportunity for new branches or applications of the Community Reinvestment Act. Developers and CDC's might see home construction possibilities, franchisers will see potential locations near the commercial corridors, and retailers will see a neighborhood-centered commercial hub to access various parts of the city.

Differing interests can then see where each approach might fit into Northside's future. This marketing piece would also serve as the first major effort to position the community in the context in which it wishes to be perceived.

### (4) Website

The Super Neighborhood Council or the Northside Redevelopment Center can take the initiative in developing and maintaining a website for community development activities. On it, community residents and others can monitor what is occurring on various projects. It may be possible to use the website as a tool to keep the general community focused on the visioning and the practical recommendations that resulted from the planning process.

### (5) 3D Virtual Reality tool

The 3D Virtual Reality tool can be used to demonstrate a neighborhood model with different design options for future development. This tool has been used in the development of urban design guidelines for commercial corridors in the Northside Village (See Chapter 5: *Urban Design Guidelines*). A completed model displays the streetscape environment for the corridors based on community preferences and priorities. This model can be a critical component for marketing the guidelines and securing acceptance from stakeholders.

### (6) Presentations

Apart from various forms of publications already mentioned, the Super Neighborhood Council can take the initiative to make presentations of the plan to stakeholders involved in implementation. For example, the urban design guidelines for the corridors should be presented to local business and property owners and to potential developers to make them aware of the community consensus relative to community character.

These tools support campaigns to initiate local actions. A "meta-community initiative", not unlike a fund drive or a blood drive, is needed to reach every person in the community to:

Share information assuring that every person has basic knowledge about future plans for the community and about how they can become informed about the initiatives planned.

### (7) Change Negative Perceptions of Neighborhood

Use *Drill Down* data to convince investors that actual capital in the community is larger than indicated by traditional data sources and there is potential for private investment from the community itself. For example:

- Northside's aggregated household income is over \$284 million. Four banks serve a ratio of nearly 2,500 people per bank;
- there are over 600 employers (200 of which are retail businesses) in the area.
- there is home equity held by the 6,755 residential buildings.